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ABSTRACT

This module on accommodation operation is intended to help supervisors or managers achieve a balance in the day-to-day running of the premises and plan for a smooth and successful future. Much of the material is concerned with the housekeeping aspects of accommodation management. The material is presented in a self-instructional format in seven sections. At the beginning of each section is a statement of the objectives that will be achieved as a result of working through the material that follows. Users of the module are asked to relate information given in the text to their own experience and knowledge. Where appropriate, suggested solutions to these questions are given on the opposite or following page. The seven sections cover the following topics: (1) recognizing one's customers; (2) meeting customer needs; (3) the importance of maintenance; (4) cleaning routines; (5) housekeeping supplies; (6) linen and laundry; and (7) health, safety, and security. (YLB)

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OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Accommodation Management
MODULE

THE
ACCOMMODATION
OPERATION

OPERATIONAL
MANAGEMENT
PROGRAMME

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The Accommodation Operation has been written by Janet Chapman. She has drawn material from *Accommodation Management*, which Victoria Wild amended and piloted for the HCTC course. She has also drawn on the HCTC/ Macmillan Education Mastercraft book *Housecraft: Accommodation Operations*, written by Val Paul and Christine Jones. *Accommodation Management* was written by Val Paul and Gillian Hayes, and published in second edition in 1987 by the HCTB as one of the self-study packages in the MSC-funded 'Open Learning Management Programme'.

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THE ACCOMMODATION OPERATION

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HOW TO USE THIS UNIT

The material in *Accommodation Management* is presented in a self-instructional format. It will help build on and consolidate the work covered in the one day HCTC course of the same title.

Accommodation Management is divided into seven sections. At the start of each section is a statement of the objectives you will be able to achieve by working through the material that follows.

From time to time you will be asked to relate information given in the text to your own experience and knowledge. Space is provided below these activities for you to write your answers. Where appropriate, suggested solutions to the questions are given on the opposite or following page.

You will also be referred to two other books:

- *Housecraft: Accommodation Operations*, HCTC/Macmillan Mastercraft series
- *Health, Hygiene and Safety in the Hotel and Catering Industry*, HCTC/ Macmillan Mastercraft series.

INTRODUCTION

Accommodation managers have four major areas of responsibility: to the customers they serve, to their business or organisation, to the premises they look after and, of course, to other members of staff who provide support.

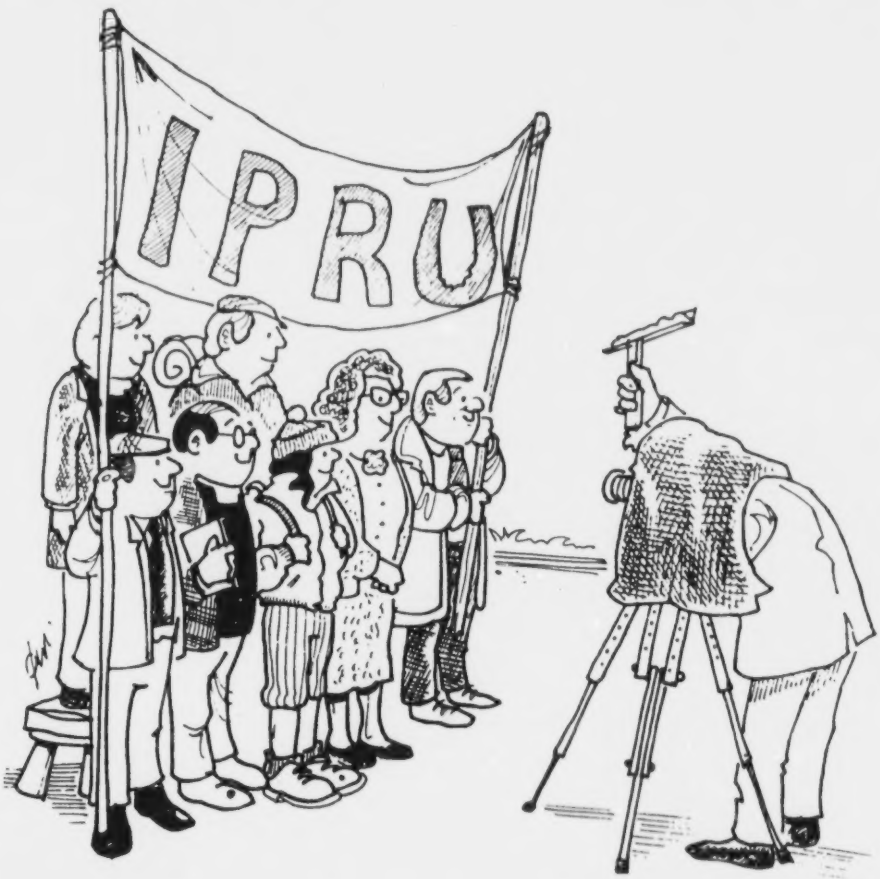
It can be a juggling act. The aim of *Accommodation Management* is to help you achieve a balance in the day-to-day running of your premises and plan for a smooth and successful future. Much of the material is concerned with the housekeeping aspects of accommodation management; readers whose work is principally concerned with the reception and front office areas will therefore gain an insight into the work of their colleagues, and be in a stronger position to deal with those customers who bring to reception their queries or complaints about the housekeeping.

By learning to recognise different types of customers, you can begin to anticipate their needs. You will move on, then, to think about how those needs are met in your own establishment, and perhaps to identify areas where improvements can be made.

The practicalities of keeping premises clean and well maintained are given in guidelines designed to encourage you to plan and establish your own maintenance and cleaning routines. You will also learn about linen care, and efficient use and ordering of housekeeping supplies.

Health, safety and security are important to guests and staff, and these are the areas you will examine in the final section of this unit.

SECTION 1
Recognising your customers



After completing this section you will be able to:

- assess the importance of your customers
- find out which particular market they fit into
- draw up a customer profile.

Your customers are always the most important people on your premises, a rule that applies whether you are running a hotel, a hospital, a university hall of residence or an overnight halt for long distance lorry drivers.

Without customers, there are no jobs – an obvious fact, but one that can sometimes be overlooked when the accommodation manager is busy with the one hundred and one tasks that seem to demand instant attention.

If customers are made to feel uncomfortable when their requests disturb a management task like checking a laundry list, they are less likely to return. What price perfect laundry if there is no-one to use it?

Make these your priorities:

- keep customers happy – and remember that their welfare, comfort, health and safety is good for business
- your premises are run for the benefit of customers, and must be managed with their needs in mind.

If you know what sort of customers are likely to be attracted to your establishment, you will be better able to anticipate and meet their needs. Armed with a clear picture of a typical customer, the person responsible for running an establishment can:

- find out how much and what sort of space is needed
- plan the specific services and facilities these customers will want
- reach them directly through marketing campaigns
- keep a check on performance and profitability
- form accurate pricing policies.

Much can be learnt about customers from simple observation and from the friendly, informal chats that take place in any organisation. It is helpful, however, to build up a more detailed picture of your average customer's life-style. That way, you can be sure of meeting his or her needs.

A good way of doing this is to build up a customer profile. As well as being a profitable exercise in terms of increasing the potential of your premises, you will find it an interesting way of taking a fresh look at the people with whom you are in daily contact. (This subject is developed further in the self-study unit *Customer Care Management*.)

At the end of this section, you will be asked to compile a customer profile, so the following guidelines will be helpful.

Who is your typical customer?

Ask these questions:

- Male or female?
- What age range?
- Singles, married couples or families?
- Occupations?
- Income bracket?

With the basic facts established, a picture will start to emerge. Never forget, though, that customers are individuals, with particular likes and dislikes. However neatly they fit your customer profile, no two customers will ever want exactly the same thing.

Why do customers choose to stay?

They may stay for a variety of reasons. Once these are known, you will have information to help you plan ahead.

For one of the following types of accommodation establishment write down below three or four reasons why customers might choose to stay in it:

- *hotel*
- *university or college hall of residence*
- *hospital or residential home*

In a hotel, guests may be:

- travelling on business or for pleasure
- touring, as individuals or in a group
- spending a holiday
- on business or interviewing
- attending a meeting or conference
- attending a banquet or function
- attending an event in the area.

In a university or college hall of residence, customers may be:

- living on a temporary basis
- attending a conference
- taking a holiday.

In a hospital or residential home, those staying may be:

- ill and in need of care
- convalescing
- in need of a long term home.

How long do they stay?

A simple calculation will reveal how long customers stay.

The information can be calculated on a monthly or annual basis, whichever is likely to prove most useful. In a hotel with a high turnover, for example, figures calculated on a monthly basis will highlight variations in pattern over the year as a whole.

This is the formula to use:

$$\text{average length of stay} = \frac{\text{the number of sleeper nights sold}}{\text{the number of guests}}$$

A sleeper night is easily calculated, for example:

20 guests x 1 night = 20 sleeper nights

Where do they come from?

The profile takes on more depth when the customers' geographic base is added. If they are local, make a note of their local businesses and organisations. If they are from overseas, find out which country.

How much do they spend?

Different customers show different spending patterns, which often depend on the opportunities offered to them to part with pounds and pence. Clearly, they will spend more money in a hotel with a variety of facilities on offer than they would in, for example, a youth hostel.

By finding out where money is currently spent, you will be able to build on this information to create new opportunities for customer spending on your premises.

When do they come?

The pattern will vary at different times of the year, or even of the week. A hotel, for example, may have mid-week business customers attending conferences, married couples enjoying weekend breaks. Knowing when to expect customers makes it possible to anticipate their needs.

Briefly describe below a typical customer of your establishment, then write down what the person will usually spend money on, and, in each case, approximately how much. Next compare your total to the average sales per customer over the last month or similar period (total sales divided by total number of customers). Finally list any new opportunities which you think could be created for such a customer to spend money on.

CLASSIFYING CUSTOMERS

From the information gained so far, it is possible to match customers closely to a particular type or segment. This is very useful for marketing purposes, when you set out to reach new customers through brochures and other means of advertising.

In a hotel, for example, they will be individuals or groups, there on business or for pleasure. You can break the picture down still further by finding out if they are on company expense accounts, or if they are individuals attending group meetings.

Non-business customers might be families, members of travel groups or people attending functions and banquets.

FINDING THE FACTS

The information needed to compile a customer profile is usually readily at hand. Some useful sources include reservation records, occupancy statistics, accounts, personal files kept on your organisation's customers. Never underestimate the value of a polite and friendly chat – most people are only too happy to talk about themselves.

Use the next two pages to build up your own customer profile. Think in terms of a major customer group that you would like to know more about. It might help to imagine your manager has asked you to look at creating a new market. Use your completed customer profile as a guide for suggestions.

Customer profile checklist

Name of establishment

Date

Who are the customers?

Why do they stay?

To which market do they belong?

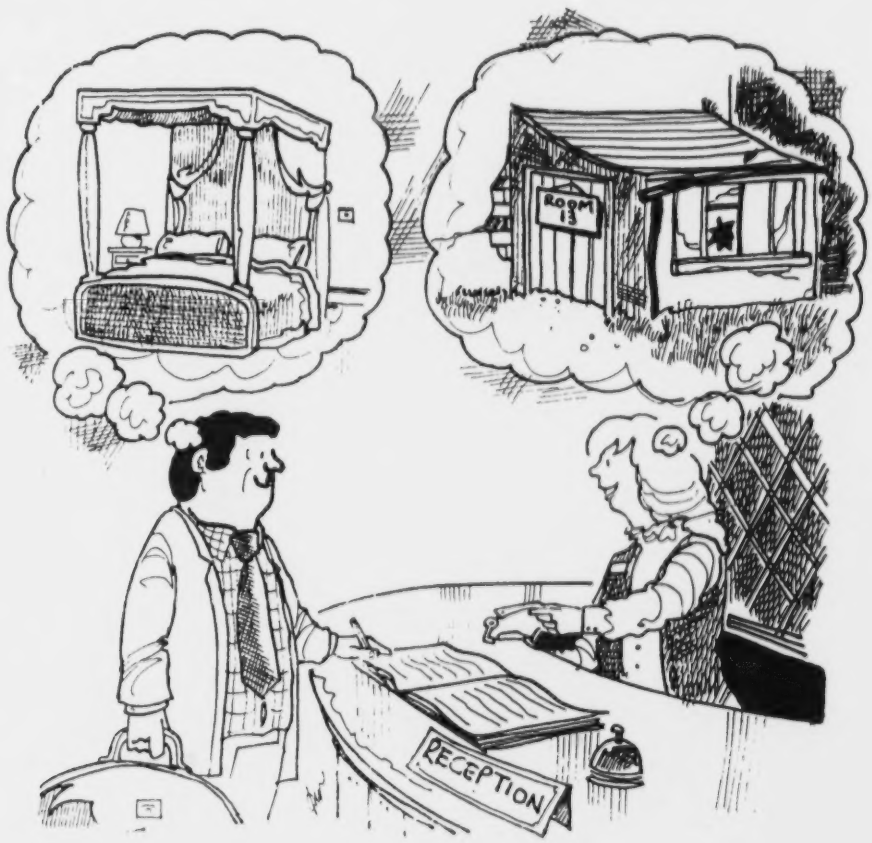
Where do they come from?

How much do they spend, and on what?

When do they come?

Other information you think might be useful.

SECTION 2
Meeting customer needs



identify the facilities and services your customers need

identify where your organisation can improve its service to customers

plan ways to meet customers' needs in the future

Recognising customers as belonging to specific groups will help you anticipate, then meet, their needs more accurately and efficiently.

Your task will clearly be much simpler if you discover that one particular type of customer – for example, businessmen or women – is vital to the success of your establishment, perhaps because they spend more money there than any other type of customer. You can focus your attention on their needs from the outset.

To spot the areas where change can be profitable, and to assess the level of service being offered now, take a closer look at your customer profile, decide what you need to know to get a clearer picture of customers' needs and expectations, and then find the answers to your questions.

Think about how the customers travel your establishment. Note below the questions you might ask in order to find out what changes could be made to improve the services offered at this stage of their visit.

If a large proportion of your customers arrive by air or train, improvements you consider might include laying on a courtesy car from the airport or station.

If many of your customers arrive by car, you probably began by asking where will they park? Follow-up questions might have been on the following lines:

Do you have a car park?

How many cars can park there?

How many coaches can park?

Is the car park well signposted?

Is there a special area for unloading?

Does the customer pay for parking?

If so, how much?

Does anyone from your organisation park customers' cars for them?

Are there arrangements for customers to park elsewhere?

These may seem very detailed questions to apply to a single area of your operation, but when you look closely at your customers' needs, you will discover important points that might be in danger of being overlooked by a more casual assessment.

Now think about the reception procedures in your establishment and list below the questions you could ask in order to get a clearer idea of potential problems and help you decide what changes should be made. It might help to imagine you are the customer.

These are some of the points you might look at in order to get a detailed picture of your establishment's reception procedures.

When do the customers usually arrive?

What type of registration record is used?

When does room allocation take place?

Are rooms allocated according to certain priorities?

Do you have rooms to cater for people with specific needs?

Do you have rooms designed for disabled people?

Who gives room keys, or cards, to customers?

Do you recommend alternative accommodation if full?

How many of your customers arrive by chance?

How do you deal with chance customers?

Is there a separate area for dealing with mass arrivals, say a group travelling by coach?

How do customers reach their rooms?

How is their luggage handled?

Are many visitors from overseas?

You might have noted that people may be tired and irritable when they arrive after a long journey.

The answers to these questions will help you to spot potential problems, and will highlight areas in which change may be beneficial. For example:

- **knowing the expected busy and quiet times, means you can plan staffing levels to deal with them**
- **improving the way your establishment caters for disabled people, by providing wheelchair ramps, or ensuring that ground floor rooms are allocated to customers with mobility problems**
- **if you have many customers from abroad, giving staff training in language skills**
- **if coach parties or families on weekend breaks form a major part of your market, providing a separate reception area for mass arrivals.**

Start to think in detail about the customers' day, in areas other than where you have responsibility, and you will discover where further improvements can be made.

Imagine you are a customer staying at your own establishment. Think of the things you would do in a typical day, once you have checked in, commenting below on how your needs would be met.

Are your customers early risers? If the answer is yes, you will probably have considered the need for wake-up calls, morning newspapers and early breakfasts.

Will they want to check out early? Perhaps there is a need to prepare bills in advance, or put more staff on early morning duty.

Will they want to conduct business in their rooms or elsewhere on the premises? You may need to change some of the bedroom furniture, or convert some rooms to meeting rooms.

Will they forget toothpaste, razors, bow ties, or ladder their tights? You might like to keep a few spares for emergencies.

Would they appreciate health or leisure facilities? It might be profitable to think about providing a mini-gym or sauna, with opening times matched to the pattern of your customers' day.

By looking at how your customers spend their days, you will see that there are many patterns of activity and any number of permutations of customer movement. Customers staying for a while will have a greater influence on the services and facilities you offer than those who arrive on fleeting stop-overs, so it may be that studying the needs of longer staying customers will reward you with greater sales opportunities.

It is not necessary to draw up a rigid timetable of customer movement - such an exercise could never be accurate, because individuals have different habits even when they belong to specific types. It is more important to be aware of the different facilities that people might be using throughout the day, such as:

- making enquiries
- making reservations
- arriving
- parking cars to unload
- registering
- moving cars
- leaving.
- staying in and using facilities
- going out and needing directions or taxis
- going to rooms
- bathing
- sleeping
- settling account

For example, in a resort hotel where most of the customers are holidaymakers, rooms may not be vacated until mid-morning. There may also be a mass exodus of long-stay customers on Saturday mornings, creating a hectic day for cleaning staff. You can see that it would make sense to adjust staff rotas to cope with this weekly demand.

How well do you know your premises?

You may be very familiar with the reception desk or the bedrooms, but when was the last time you looked at a room a customer would occupy?

Try to familiarise yourself with every room on your premises, and assess it from a customer's point of view. Spending a night in every bedroom could be a foolproof way of tracking down squeaky beds! Playing a game of squash will help you cast a critical eye over the sporting facilities. Holding a staff meeting in the conference room might reveal poor acoustics.

When you start to familiarise yourself with your premises, look out for the 'hidden' areas that can make or mar a customer's stay. List below the points you might look out for.

Your points probably covered the following:

- decor and atmosphere
- ease and efficiency
- cleanliness
- comfort
- privacy
- first impressions.

Customers' reaction to their stay is an invaluable aid in planning for the future. The only way to find out if they are satisfied is to ask, either in person, or through a questionnaire, which might be left in guest rooms or at reception.

Remember to record all the information gathered, so that an overall picture can be built up. Recurring complaints can then be dealt with; individual whims will provide topics for staff discussion.

Overleaf you will find an example of a questionnaire designed to assess customers' views on their accommodation.

	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Did you receive courteous and efficient attention from?			
RECEPTION			
HALL PORTER			
CASHIER			
TELEPHONIST			
THE BAR			
LOUNGE			
What was your opinion of these aspects of your bedroom?			
CLEANLINESS			
DECORATION			
COMFORT			
MAID SERVICE			
Do you have any comments on the following?			
Breakfast			
ROOM SERVICE			
RESTAURANT			
Room Service (other than breakfast)			
CHOICE OF DISHES			
MINI BAR			
SERVICE			
Bracewell's Restaurant			
QUALITY OF FOOD			
CHOICE OF DISHES			
SERVICE			
The Brasserie			
QUALITY OF FOOD			
CHOICE OF DISHES			
SERVICE			

Do you have any observations or suggestions on how we can make your stay at The Lane Hotel more enjoyable?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is this the first time you have stayed at The Lane Hotel?	Yes	No
Do you ever need banqueting or conference facilities in Edinburgh?	Yes	No
Would you like further information on the hotel?	Yes	No
Did you use the hotel garage?	Yes	No
Would you like to open a credit account?	Yes	No

Name _____

Company _____

Room number _____ **Nationality** _____

Date of arrival _____ **Date of departure** _____

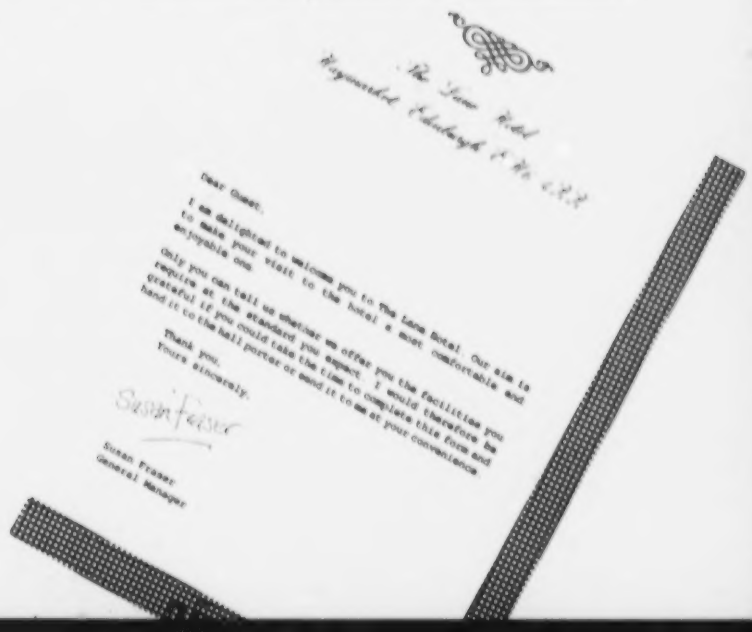
Daytime tel. no. _____

Home address _____

_____

_____

_____


The Lane Hotel
Dear Guest,
I am delighted to welcome you to The Lane Hotel. Our aim is to make your visit to the hotel a most comfortable and enjoyable one.
Only you can tell us whether we offer you the facilities you require at the standard you expect. I would therefore be grateful if you could take the time to complete this form and hand it to the hall porter or send it to me at your convenience.
Thank you.
Yours sincerely,
Susan Fraser
Susan Fraser
General Manager

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Now that you are more familiar with your typical customers, and have a clearer picture of their needs, you will be able to suggest changes to improve facilities and routines at your establishment.

And what of the future? New developments, new needs, new markets can crop up at any time.

Recent trends include the establishment of budget priced hotels on motorways, hotel theme weekends (anything from wine tasting to murder hunts), and the setting up of special stop-over areas for long distance lorry drivers.

Most of these trends were unexpected ten years ago, or even more recently, but have succeeded because someone spotted a need, and built a business from servicing a new market.

Look at your customer profile and think about changes you might see in the future. Note these below with your ideas on new and profitable services you could offer to meet this changed life-style.

Proof of how a bright idea, based on careful market research, can plug a gap in the market is provided by the story of Truckworld (over-night stop-over hotels designed specifically for lorry drivers).

Before the first Truckworld was built at West Thurrock, in Essex, the company behind the development looked at the habits and life-styles of their potential customers so that they could provide exactly what was needed in terms of accommodation and services.

They found out	*so they*
The first priority for lorry drivers was security for their vehicles	surrounded the site by a perimeter fence, monitored by closed circuit television and guarded by security men at the entrance.
How much money was allocated to drivers in daily allowances	geared the accommodation and prices to that range.
That drivers like to have a shower at their journey's end	provided good washroom facilities.
That drivers travel with their own soap and towel	could cut costs by not providing these items. Nor were cupboards or hangers needed in rooms, as most guests were staying for only one night.
That lorry drivers need certain facilities for their vehicles in the parking area	set out to provide break-down services, truck-wash facilities, freight forwarding and so on by way of concessionaires, who would pay Truckworld a percentage of each transaction.

Who would have thought that a no frills operation with a huge car park but no soap and towels for its guests could be successful? The secret was an action plan for a business which clearly identified its customers and then set out to meet their needs in an imaginative and comprehensive way.

SECTION 3
The importance of maintenance

After completing this section you will be able to:

- state why maintenance should be planned
- draw up a maintenance plan.

If you have ever been unlucky enough to experience a burst pipe in your home, you will know that the results of this domestic disaster reach further than the temporary absence of hot water. The chances are that decor will have been ruined by pouring water, and power supplies threatened. You probably had to call in at least three professionals, plumber, electrician and decorator, to put matters right.

When the same kind of accident happens in an accommodation operation, the potential for damage – both to the premises and to your relationship with customers – is enormous. Paying customers will not be prepared to put up with the inconvenience as they might at home, nor should they be expected to.

The sensible manager, like the sensible householder, avoids this sort of incident by following a programme of planned maintenance. This simply means keeping things in good order so that sudden disasters are far less likely.

The alternative, an emergency which calls for sudden and possibly lengthy repair work, might well stretch both your budget and your customers' patience to breaking point.

Remember, too, that your premises are there for customers' benefit, and try to view your surroundings through their eyes. Shabby paintwork, peeling wallpaper, stained baths or grubby curtains will not encourage a return visit.

No building is without its faults, but the secret of successful maintenance lies in the ability to anticipate when things might go wrong or wear out and then put them right with the minimum of fuss and disruption to customers.

There are four main types of maintenance, all of them vital to the smooth running of your premises.

Planned maintenance An on-going programme of work designed to make sure that costly and disruptive emergency maintenance is rarely, if ever, needed. It includes checking and inspecting essential items like boilers, and looking at major pieces of equipment such as fridges and washing machines to see if they are nearing the end of their life cycle. You may find it helpful to draw up a schedule, to indicate time intervals at which checks should be made and work carried out, and refer to it as a useful 'maintenance map' of your premises.

Preventative maintenance This takes place when you know something is about to fail. For example, a cistern which does not flush every time the lever is pressed will eventually fail. Faults like this are easily spotted when you follow an efficient planned maintenance programme.

Corrective maintenance This takes place after a failure has occurred, and is inevitably more disruptive to customers. It can mean anything from mending a fuse to replacing a pipe, but is best avoided. If you follow a planned maintenance programme, seeing that things are put right before they break down completely, there will rarely be a need for corrective maintenance.

Emergency maintenance This has to be carried out immediately. It can be hugely disruptive, and is often very costly. If, however, a situation occurs that would mean health or safety risks to your customers, damage to your property or neighbouring properties, then it must be put right at once. A gas explosion or contamination of water supply would come into this category.

Think back on the maintenance work that has been required in your establishment in the last 6 to 12 months and list the various jobs under the most appropriate heading below.

PLANNED MAINTENANCE

PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE

CORRECTIVE MAINTENANCE

EMERGENCY MAINTENANCE

Customers and costs

Good maintenance plays a dual role in the smooth running of an establishment. It satisfies customer needs by ensuring a pleasant, efficient and comfortable environment, and it aids sensible budgeting by spreading costs over a pre-determined period of time.

With this dual role in mind, list below what you would regard as the main aims of a planned maintenance programme.

These are some of the aims of a planned maintenance programme:

- All facilities should meet customers' expectations.
- Maintenance should be carried out efficiently, but unobtrusively, disturbing customers as little as possible.
- Costs should be carefully considered at the programme planning stage, to avoid unnecessary overspending.
- The cost of maintaining an item should be spread over its expected life cycle.
- Legal requirements, such as insurance, should be taken into account.
- Inspections should be held regularly, follow-up work carried out as soon as practicably possible.
- A maintenance timetable should be planned, based on information from manufacturers, past experience and common sense.

Past records will help determine the lifespan of high-cost items like washing machines and computers. The ideal maintenance programme would then try to control deterioration by regular checking and replacement of faulty parts. The aim is to keep the item working efficiently throughout its estimated lifespan, and to replace it in time to avoid breakdown.

Accurate record keeping is a great help when it comes to drawing up a maintenance plan. Keeping detailed records on:

- when things break down
- when they were last checked
- why they have failed

will save you or someone else time and trouble in the future. Make a note, too, of:

- when rooms are decorated
- when they are due for re-decoration.

These are the basic details you will need before you can decide on a maintenance plan:

- the capital cost of assets
- their expected life
- their predicted maintenance costs
- their possible re-sale costs.

The amount of money to be spent on maintenance depends upon the size of the organisation and of the premises. Total maintenance costs fall into two areas:

Capital costs These cover large initial outlays like:

- fees
- land and construction costs
- refurbishments
- large items of equipment

Revenue costs These cover on-going payments such as:

- day-to-day maintenance
- painting and decorating
- looking after walls, windows and woodwork
- looking after services and utilities (gas, electricity)
- cleaning services
- administrative costs
- other overheads.

Experience of running a maintenance programme will show you which are the most costly areas.

As a general guide, people responsible for maintenance usually find that:

31% of their budget is spent on overheads

25% on services and utilities

24% on administration

13% on cleaning services

4% on fabric maintenance (walls, windows and woodwork)

3% on painting and decorating.

To help you think in detail about where the money goes, try to list below all the activities that would be covered by maintenance costs on your premises.

These are some of the things you should have covered:

- inside and outdoor paintwork
- outdoor walls and roofs
- fittings and fixtures
- indoor finishes
- windows
- contractors (eg window cleaners)
- gas, electricity and other fuels
- plumbing and drainage
- heating, air-conditioning
- lifts and escalators
- maintenance and cleaning staff
- laundry
- security
- waste disposal
- insurance
- rates.

From this list you can see that every part of your premises, and every service you use or offer, can incur maintenance costs. So it is important to remember that when you add a new item, a lift for example, you will be paying not only the capital outlay, but must also allow for continuing costs in making sure it runs smoothly.

If your premises do not at the moment have a planned maintenance programme, you will need to think carefully about when items and services need to be checked and perhaps repaired.

Regular inspections of every room and area used by customers and staff will help you avoid emergencies, and see when essential work needs doing. You should aim to spread the disturbance and expense of maintaining your premises, or to concentrate it into off-peak periods.

In seasonal establishments, disruptive work like painting and decorating can be dealt with before opening for a new season. But these days, the trend is for year-round opening at all types of establishments and careful thought must be given to the timing of their maintenance programmes.

If you were facing a situation where maintenance work had never been properly planned, you might set about putting things right in the following order:

Inspections come first, routine and systematic so that you are sure that every vulnerable part of your premises has been looked at.

Next comes *preventative maintenance*, when you will put right the faults highlighted by the inspection.

Now you can think about *planned maintenance*, concentrating on large areas like roofs, boilers and floors. Some of these things will only need to be maintained at long intervals, even every 5 or 10 years, but you should still allow for them.

Redecoration should also be recorded. On very large premises, it may be a continual task, rather like painting the Forth Bridge. But remember that it needs to be carefully staged to avoid disruption to your customers, who will not wish to return to their rooms to find the ceiling being painted.

Some establishments use *survey sheets*, which serve as an efficient reminder of maintenance work needed in each area.

Use this survey sheet to carry out a survey of one public room on your premises, listing conditions in each area.

Survey sheet *location*

date

---

ceiling

walls

flooring

woodwork

windows

doors

plumbing

power sources

heating

furnishings

paintwork

equipment (for example, hairdryers, trouser press)

Once you have a detailed record of each room and its equipment, you will find it an invaluable aid in carrying out corrective and preventative maintenance. Most importantly, it will help you plan a redecoration programme designed to cause minimum disruption to customers.

Redecoration includes painting and wallpapering, and in most establishments it is a fairly frequent activity which ensures the pleasant surroundings, cleanliness and freshness that customers look for.

Refurbishment on the other hand is a major process which does not normally take place very often. It means a complete overhaul of premises, with new equipment being installed, perhaps because there is a need for modernisation, or because your organisation has decided to change the use of your building.

Usually, refurbishment is regarded as a one-off capital cost and would not be included in the maintenance budget. It is also an area where it is advisable to consult specialists who would co-ordinate the work to lessen the inevitable disruption to customers.

ENERGY

These days, people who run establishments like halls of residence and hotels are asked to think about the contribution they can make towards saving energy.

In most premises, it is possible to make substantial savings without lowering the standards of service offered to customers. Quite often these savings will result in lower operating costs, a worthwhile bonus to bear in mind.

Imagine you have been asked to investigate saving energy and recycling systems on your own premises. Remembering anything you may have read on the subject, what suggestions can you make?

Here are some areas of potential energy saving to consider:

Heating systems Automatic systems can regulate heating patterns while minimising wasted energy; better instructions might be required to persuade customers to use the equipment properly, and not open the window because they feel too warm.

Off-peak electricity You may find that some tasks, for example washing linen, could be carried out at off-peak periods.

Alternative sources of energy Comparisons of costs of using different sources of energy – for example, fuel oil or solid fuel instead of electricity or gas – might lead to savings.

Take a break before beginning the next section, which deals with cleaning routines.

SECTION 4
Cleaning routines

After completing this section you will be able to:

plan and control the cleaning of your premises

organise cleaning routines for large and small areas.

By caring about the standards of cleanliness in your establishment, you are caring also about your customers, and meeting their needs. Nothing is more off putting to customers than dirty reception areas and run-down rooms, where the cleaning has obviously been skimped. Neglect is unwelcoming, and will not encourage return visits.

While bad cleaning has a negative effect on business, consider the impact that spotless tablecloths, crisp, clean sheets and sparkling bathrooms will have. These things are expected, but they are also appreciated and remembered, and can play a very positive part in encouraging customers to return.

The importance of hygiene, not only in hospitals but also in hotels, halls of residence and indeed any other type of establishment cannot be stressed too strongly, and you will find more detailed information on this subject in the last section of this unit.

Organising routines that will result in a consistently high standard of cleanliness is clearly vital to the success of any establishment.

Design aspects

First impressions count. Your customers' first impressions of your establishment will be favourable if the premises are smart and clean, and the decor and furnishings create a pleasing atmosphere. From a practical point of view, too, good design has a bearing on cleaning, maintenance and hygiene. Here are some design points to consider in relation to your premises:

Maintenance Is a certain colour or texture easy to look after? Deep pile carpets, for example, will create extra work at a seaside hotel, as the pile will clog with sand.

Durability Good materials cost more, but last longer. Materials used in public areas should be able to withstand rigorous use and repeated cleaning.

Ease of movement Well designed premises ensure a smooth flow of staff and customers, goods and services. Fittings should be easily accessible for cleaning staff.

Good design is also about meeting people's needs. Whatever section of the market your establishment attracts, you will find that your customers include both able bodied and disabled people. Yet hotels in particular have been criticised for being slow to meet the needs of their disabled customers.

Design can play a part in ensuring that your facilities for the disabled are more far reaching than simply ensuring that wheelchairs can get in and out of the building. Disabled people, who include the blind and deaf, should be made to feel welcome and should be able to stay in comfort and security, taking part in all the usual activities like eating in the restaurant and having a drink at the bar. You could start to think about their comfort by taking a look at your car park - are there spaces clearly marked out for disabled drivers?

Now move indoors, as it were, and list below some of the ways in which good design can meet the needs of disabled visitors.

Here are some ideas:

- a flat or ramped entrance, with wide doorway
- ground floor bedroom accommodation
- rooms designed for the physically disabled
- public toilets on the ground floor
- toilets equipped for the disabled
- a reception desk at wheelchair level
- easy access to bar and restaurant
- help for guests with hearing difficulties
- braille menus and lift push buttons
- emergency exit routes for wheelchairs.

> For a fuller appreciation of the importance of design, you might like to refer to units 7 to 14 of *Housecraft: Accommodation Operations*. Page 17 carries a useful checklist and diagram on designing for the disabled.

People responsible for setting standards of cleaning must understand the scope of the task.

You will need to know the layout of the building, the fittings and furniture in each area, and which areas have high priority and which have special needs when it comes to cleaning.

Thorough familiarisation of your premises is the key to establishing efficient cleaning routines. You should aim to establish which areas have special needs, such as leisure areas, outdoor areas or computer rooms. Rooms with ornate and perhaps precious plasterwork will obviously need special treatment, and so will antique furniture. Computer rooms will need to be kept dust-free, and will need a different pattern of cleaning and different cleaning materials.

List below the different areas of your premises that need to be cleaned in a special way, mentioning what special treatment, if any, they are given.

Establishing routines

How often cleaning is carried out will depend on:

The amount of dirt How dirty places get depends on how often they are used and what people do there. Bathrooms, for example, are used frequently, and for a specific purpose. You should also take into account the age and design of your premises, and where they are. For example, by the sea the air will be salty and corrosive, and in an industrial area, air-carried pollution will lead to a faster build-up of dirt.

Standard of cleanliness. Customers expect certain standards of cleanliness, with areas like bathrooms, kitchens, toilets and operating theatres expected to come up to very high standards indeed. You will be familiar with the standards expected at your own establishment, and should aim at the best results that can be achieved within your budget. You would probably decide that areas like corridors should have less time and attention lavished on them than bathrooms, because they are used less intensively or frequently.

Costs Cleaning costs money, in terms of the staff employed to do it and the equipment they use. Usually, you will have a budget to cover these costs, and so should aim for a balance of care and cost in establishing cleaning routines. Your priorities should be to :

- set standards of cleaning that meet customers' expectations
- ensure hygienic and safe conditions
- help prolong the life of decorations and furnishings
- keep within your budget.

Usually, you will tell those responsible for cleaning how often a task should be carried out, first deciding whether it should be a daily, weekly, monthly or even six-monthly task.

Don't forget that it is possible to overclean. If, for example, wood furniture is polished too often, the surface will become sticky and start to attract dust. Money will have been wasted on cleaning materials, and time will have been wasted that could have been spent on another task.

Once you are familiar with the fittings and surfaces of your premises, you will know what materials should be used to clean them, how often they should be cleaned and how long it will take.

Then, in order to give cleaning staff a sensible working routine, you must decide the order in which areas should be cleaned, the equipment and method to be used, and what the finished result should look like. You can say, for example, that a tap must be free from smears.

Note below what other points should be borne in mind when deciding on an efficient cleaning routine.

These are the points made in *Housecraft: Accommodation Operations* (see page 37):

- The job should be completed as quickly as possible, with minimum effort. Tasks can be linked for greater efficiency. A person taking the rubbish out of a bedroom, for example, can save an extra journey by returning with clean linen.
- The same methods should always be used for each task, to make sure that results meet consistent standards.
- Types of cleaning equipment and supplies used – and there is a huge variety – should be kept to a minimum to keep down costs and save time spent on maintaining tools.
- Any jobs that cause dust, stripping beds for example, should be done before vacuum cleaning, which is usually the last task. Soiled items and rubbish should also be removed before other cleaning work starts, as they may carry bacteria.
- Remember to start with the cleanest areas. If they are cleaned first and the dirtiest places last, then dirt is less likely to be transferred from dirty to clean areas.

Once a cleaning routine has been established, you will need to monitor standards. It is helpful to have a checklist of each room or area, so that inspections will be consistent.

Cleaning routines vary according to the size of premises and what they are used for, but the following example will give you the basic idea.

Ace Hotel

Cleaning specification for furniture and fittings – general standard

Item	*Treatment*	*Frequency*
mirror	clean	daily, after use
waste paper baskets	empty	daily, after use
	wash	weekly
WC	clean	daily, after use
chairs	damp dust	daily, after use

Draw up below a bedroom cleaning routine for a new member of staff who is unfamiliar with your premises, paying particular attention to hygiene points. (Alternatively choose another area, for instance a function room, or the control office.) Try it out yourself, to see if it works efficiently or will need to be changed.

How does your routine compare with this one (from *Housecraft: Accommodation Operations*, page 85):

1. Place trolley with room cleaning equipment, fresh linen and room supplies outside the room.
2. Pull back curtains and open windows if possible to ventilate the room.
3. Remove any food trays.
4. Empty ashtrays and waste bins, including those in the bathroom. Ashtrays should be emptied into a metal bin to avoid fire risk.
5. Flush toilet, put in alkali detergent or strong acid cleaner.
6. Strip beds.
7. Remove all soiled linen. Place in bag provided or down linen chute.
8. Re-make beds.
9. Leave dust to settle in room and clean bathroom.
10. Damp dust all furniture, making sure that nothing is missed by starting at door and moving in one direction, dusting everything in contact with the wall and then everything in the centre of the room.
11. Check and replace guest supplies.
12. Close windows or adjust air conditioning.
13. Check that all electrical fittings are working and report any that are not.
14. Replace ash trays and waste bins.
15. Vacuum clean floor and (weekly) upholstered furniture.
16. Check the room's appearance and straighten pictures or pillows, remove any smears on mirrors or furniture.
17. Leave the room locked, and let the person you report to know it has been cleaned.

You will find useful information on cleaning routines for the different areas of your premises in *Housecraft: Accommodation Operations*, including detailed guidance on dealing with specialised places like hospital wards, halls of residence and leisure areas.

On the hygiene aspects there is also detailed guidance in a companion title in the *Mastercraft* series: *Health, Hygiene and Safety in the Hotel and Catering Industry*.

Hygiene in cleaning

With general cleaning in mind, here are some important points to remember:

- Hands must be washed regularly, especially after smoking, eating, using the toilet and blowing the nose, to prevent bacteria spreading.
- Cloths, mops and similar cleaning equipment should be properly washed and dried after use. If not, the bacteria will multiply on them in storage and spread when they are used again.
- When dust is scattered it must be collected, otherwise it will carry bacteria back to surfaces which have been cleaned.
- A beautifully polished bathroom glass becomes a deadly hazard if it is wiped with a used guest towel.
- Fresh bed linen should not be left near soiled linen stripped from the bed - otherwise it may carry bacteria.
- Basins should not be wiped with clothes that have been used to clean toilets – harmful bacteria will be left.
- Bedroom crockery and glassware should not be cleaned in the bathroom basin. They should be taken to a central washing up area where they can be washed at the right temperatures to ensure hygiene.

Some of these points may seem pernickety; they are not. Bacteria can spread like wildfire and, since you are responsible for the health and welfare of customers on your premises, you must take every precaution necessary to prevent germs spreading.

Nowadays, the dangers of bacteria are more widely known and understood. Illnesses like AIDS and Legionnaires Disease can both cause death, and the publicity given to them has ensured that hygiene is not confined just to avoiding food poisoning. You will find more information about the precautions which can be taken against these diseases in the last section of this unit.

The fact is that bacteria can spread from infected sources as easily in any part of your premises as it can in the food preparation area, and the results can be deadly wherever it occurs. So you can see that hygiene must always be uppermost in your mind when you are planning cleaning routines.

Use the space below to note any changes which are required in the cleaning routines in your establishment to achieve higher standards of hygiene.

Cleaning can be repetitive work, especially if it is to be effective – and there is a danger that those who carry it out will become bored and therefore less efficient.

Well motivated staff, who are not bored, will do a better job of cleaning your premises and ensuring that your customers are satisfied. It is in everyone's interests that you try and maintain good relationships with cleaning staff and motivate them to do their job to the best of their ability.

You can help the motivation process by being familiar with the work carried out by cleaning staff. Grumbles about procedures or problems with equipment can be more easily solved when you have experience of them yourself; for this reason it is always useful to try out cleaning routines before asking others to tackle them.

Try, too, to make life easier for those who clean your premises by providing them with suitable equipment for the work they are expected to do. Initial outlay on trolleys, for example, to take cleaning equipment more easily from room to room, will be rewarded with greater efficiency.

Teamwork is particularly important – if one person turns up late for work, others may have extra work to do, causing delay and resentment among staff and customers.

Cleaning equipment will be used by a number of people, and it is important that each person keeps it in good condition for the next user. Cleaning staff depend on their colleagues, too, to help with heavy tasks like turning mattresses, or moving furniture.

Achieving the best results through your staff is covered in greater depth in the *Supervisory Skills* self-study units:

- *Task Management*
- *Communications*
- *Leadership and Motivation*

and in the *Personnel Management* self-study unit:

- *Staff Retention.*

Take a break before starting on the next section, in which you will learn about the supplies needed to run an efficient cleaning operation.

SECTION 5
Housekeeping supplies

After completing this section you will be able to:

- work out which supplies are needed, and how many
- write your own purchasing specification
- organise efficient storage.

Keeping things clean can be a costly business. Haphazard use of the multitude of cleaning agents on the market wastes money, leads to poor results and can even damage valuable fittings. In terms of customer satisfaction, staff time and the housekeeping budget, it really does pay to be able to select the right tools and cleaning agents for each area.

The following basic guide – which is based on the information in *Housecraft: Accommodation Operations* – will help you decide what to use, where.

Neutral detergents These are the common, general-purpose detergents. Used for washing dishes, damp dusting and mopping, and for routine cleaning tasks.

Alkali detergents Used for heavier tasks, such as stripping polishes on vinyl floors. They are also known as degreasing agents, and are corrosive, so should not be used too often in case they damage surfaces. Some contain abrasives, so should never be used on surfaces like plastic baths.

Acid cleaners Used for cleaning toilets and removing stains on baths and wash hand basins. When using strong acids, it is important to follow instructions carefully and never mix with other cleaning agents, as the combination may produce harmful chemicals.

Solvent based cleaners Able to dissolve heavy deposits of grease and oil, and used for removing wax from wooden floors, also for dry cleaning and stain removal.

Abrasive cleaners These scouring cleaners come in powder, paste, cream or liquid form, and are used mostly for cleaning enamel and ceramic sanitary ware.

Cleaning equipment is usually of two sorts; cloths, mops and brushes and electrical equipment like vacuum cleaners and polishers. You will probably need some, or most, of the following:

Cleaning cloths They should be soft, absorbent and lintless - so they do not leave fluff behind – and disposable, or capable of being thoroughly washed after use, so that bacteria are not spread. Colour codes are useful – red cloths for toilet areas, green for ones that come into contact with food, for example.

Mop sweepers Used for collecting dust and small items of waste from floors and walls.

Wet mops There are three basic types, all suitable for washing floors. Short tail dolly mops, long tail or Kentucky mops which can be detached and sent to the laundry for washing and sponges which have a built-in squeezing device.

Brushes Include long-handled brooms suitable for sweeping outdoor areas and hand brushes and dustpans. Specially designed brushes are used for toilet pans, and to avoid the risk of spreading bacteria, separate brushes should be used for each toilet.

Carpet sweepers Sometimes chosen because they make less noise than vacuum cleaners and are useful for removing light rubbish in the interim between vacuum cleaning periods.

Trolleys Useful for carrying cleaning agents from area to area. They are also used for carrying guest supplies and linen from room to room, and can cut down on unnecessary journeys for staff in large establishments.

The three main types of electrical cleaners used are *vacuum or suction cleaners,* either upright, cyclindrical or canister models; *rotary floor cleaners* which can be used for scrubbing and buffing hard floors or shampooing carpets; and *shampooing machines.*

You will find a useful description and comparison of the different types available on pages 45 to 47 of *Housecraft: Accommodation Operations.*

List below all the various cleaning agents and items of equipment which are in use on your premises. Indicate any items you now think are unnecessary, and list separately any different agents or new equipment you feel would do the job better.

Ordering supplies

The cleaning routines you have established will be your guide to the amount of cleaning materials and equipment that must be ordered. You can estimate how much of a certain cleaning agent is needed on a weekly basis by simply multiplying the amount used each time, by the number of times the task is performed. In this way, you will build up a total picture of the supplies needed throughout your premises.

Careful thought is needed when it comes to deciding what, and how many, pieces of larger equipment such as vacuum cleaners are required.

Cost will probably be your first consideration. Sometimes money can be saved if several people share the use of one piece of equipment, but before you decide on this option, it might help to consider the following points:

- How portable is the equipment?
- Where will it be kept?
- Will the extra use and carrying about mean it will not last as long as might be expected?
- Will sharing mean that infection could be spread from one area to another?
- Savings made by sharing should be balanced against discounts offered by some manufacturers if you buy more than one item.

Then there are the various things provided by your establishment as a service to guests. It can include anything from shampoo to sewing kits to writing paper, plus essentials like Do not disturb signs for doors.

These supplies are usually supplied or replenished on a daily basis, so you will probably find it useful to calculate how many you need each week. Here is a simple formula which you can use to find the right number to put on your supply shopping list.

supplies per room x number of rooms x 7 days x occupancy level

For example:

2 items per room x 100 rooms x 7 days x 80% occupancy

$$= \frac{2 \times 100 \times 7 \times 80}{100}$$

= 1120 items per week.

For two cleaning agents used in your establishment and two room supply items, work out the quantity you require for the next year using the formula just given. Use the table below, adding the other information asked for.

Occupancy level for year: *Number of rooms:*

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*
Name of item				
Amount used per room				
Amount used per week				
Amount used per year				
Frequency of order				
Order quantity				
Supplier				
Other comments				

Just as there is a great deal of choice in the types and brands of supplies available to you, so there are many different sources of supply.

It is important to keep up-to-date, as new products are frequently available. Not everything that is new is better, but by being aware of new developments you will be sure not to miss anything that could lead to greater efficiency and save money.

One way to find out about new products is to chat to the representatives who will call on you frequently. While being prepared to listen to them, always remember that you can build up a broader picture of what is on offer by keeping your eyes and ears open and considering all the options before making up your mind.

Make a point of reading articles and advertisements in trade journals, refer to text books if you like, and ask large purchasing organisations for their catalogues.

You can also visit exhibitions and suppliers' showrooms, and, if you have the chance to talk to other people responsible for running premises, can learn a great deal by talking to them.

Who will supply you? If you work for a large organisation, you might find that suppliers are decided by head office. This is because a large company can make great savings by buying in bulk; many suppliers offer worthwhile discounts to firms who place regular orders with them.

This method of ordering supplies in called *central purchasing*. In organisations using this system, people responsible for cleaning are usually given a list detailing the items which can be purchased, ideally with a choice of products within each range.

Lack of choice can be frustrating for managers asked to rely on central purchasing, but problems can be avoided if head office is kept informed about special needs that may arise.

Grumbles about central purchasing usually include lack of choice, individual needs not being taken into account, and the fact that it can make the accommodation manager's job less stimulating.

Against these must be weighed the advantages. Central purchasing can lead to savings, gives better control of what is bought, leads to an acceptable standard of results and saves the time that may be spent on considering which brands to order.

If there is no central purchasing policy at your establishment you will be able to choose your own suppliers. This will help you to order the most appropriate goods for your own establishment, but at the same time can lead to difficulties in choosing because of the huge variety of goods on offer.

Bearing in mind the need to balance suitability and price, these are some of the aims you should try to build into your purchasing policy:

- remember that prices must be competitive
- order things before you will need them
- look out for special offers
- buy in bulk to save money if you have storage space
- avoid haphazard buying.

The next step is to draw up a *purchasing specification*, a detailed document which should contain as much information as necessary about the product you wish to order, including details on the quality sought.

Accurate specifications are important because:

- they help to establish reliable costing
- give the supplier a clear idea of what is expected
- ensure that staff know what goods they will be using.

Draw up a purchasing specification for an item in constant use at your own establishment. Remember to include all the details about the item that you think the supplier will need to know. You can use a specification from your establishment as a guide, and may wish to suggest improvements.

Did you remember to include the following information:

- name of product
- intended use of product
- details on grade, size, brand name, and so forth
- procedure for checking quality on delivery
- price range
- amount required
- composition of product
- design.

Sometimes you may wish to test the performance of new equipment and new products. In that case, you can ask suppliers to lend items to you for a limited period, say one month, or supply a small quantity or even a free sample, so that you can try them out and decide whether they are suitable for your premises.

The amount of supplies you are able to keep on your premises will depend on the amount of storage space available to you.

Carefully planned stores are crucial to the efficient carrying out of cleaning and maintenance routines, but all too often they are cramped and badly designed, leading to problems in finding things and taking them out of store.

Take a critical look at the storage area on your premises, and indicate below how many of the following standards it meets:

- ☐ *A place for everything and everything in its place, whether shelf, cupboard or hanging rack.*
- ☐ *Things used most often kept nearest the door.*
- ☐ *Supplies arranged so that they can be used in rotation, oldest first.*
- ☐ *Records kept on everything in store, and shelf life noted.*
- ☐ *Storage areas made secure.*
- ☐ *Equipment such as trolleys or measures for liquids close at hand.*
- ☐ *Access to stores controlled, and only authorised staff allowed to enter.*
- ☐ *Temperature controlled to prevent deterioration of goods, with adequate light and ventilation.*
- ☐ *A heating element, so that equipment can be dried after use and laundering.*
- ☐ *Inflammable goods stored under special conditions.*
- ☐ *Stores issued at certain times of day only, so control can be kept of stock and time is not wasted.*

Energy saving

Have you ever tried cleaning windows and mirrors the old-fashioned way, with crumpled newspaper and vinegar? Not only does it produce a sparkling, smear-free finish, it is also remarkably cheap and, because it dispenses with oil-based cleaning products, energy saving.

No-one is suggesting that accommodation managers responsible for keeping a pristine sheen on scores of windows and mirrors should start handing out newspapers and vinegar to their staff – although one energy-conscious hotel in Wales does indeed rely on this method of window cleaning.

The point is that everyone should start to think about the contribution they can make towards saving energy, bearing in mind the size and style of their establishment.

Energy is one of the most expensive overheads in any organisation, so it makes sense to be economical in the use of electricity, gas and solid fuel. Remember that any form of waste will lead to loss of profit.

Note below some ways in which you can control the use of energy and reduce waste in cleaning operations.

These are some of the ways in which you can control use of energy.

- By using hot water in sensible quantities, turning off taps firmly and making sure no-one else leaves them running. Hot water is not always essential for cleaning tasks – sometimes lukewarm, or even cold water, can be used instead.
- By switching off lights whenever you leave a room. A note on saving energy can be left next to the light switch as a reminder.
- By conserving heat by closing interior doors, not leaving windows open and closing curtains early in the evening. Set the central heating at a slightly lower temperature, and make sure it is turned off in rooms which are not being used.
- By using glass or dishwashing machines only when you have a full load. Running the cycle when the machine is half-full wastes energy. Faulty equipment can use too much power, too – faults should be reported as soon as they occur.

And these are some of the way you can control waste when cleaning.

- By following the directions for diluting and using cleaning agents carefully.
- By using the right amount of cleaning fluid. Too much may be difficult to remove and wastes money.
- By changing cleaning solutions and rinsing water regularly. Cleaning will not be effective if solutions are stale and dirty, and bacteria may be spread.
- When washing glasses, china or cutlery by hand, by not trying to economise by reducing the temperature of the rinsing water. It needs to be very hot at 80 degree Celsius in order to disinfect.

Many hotels up and down the country have cut their fuel bills by as much as five per cent by adopting sensible energy-saving policies, which can apply to any similar sized establishments.

Here are some examples of schemes and savings that have already paid dividends.

Embassy has saved on energy costs by asking for monthly computer audits on energy efficiency at each of its 44 hotels. The company is also planning to install combined heat and power systems, an electricity generation system which uses waste heat to provide hot water and heating. It also uses low energy lighting.

Hilton National's newest hotels use key card energy control switches which switch off bedroom power and lighting circuits when rooms are not occupied.

Swallow and Holiday Inns do not use aerosols containing ozone damaging chloro-fluorocarbons (CFCs).

Trusthouse Forte also uses CFC-free packaging materials, and the Stakis group has developed an ozone-friendly programme for its hotels by working with its supplier Union Chemicals. Stakis is also removing all phosphates from cleaning materials.

Hidden Hotels use recycled paper for notepads and computer paper.

You can see that there are many ways and means of saving, some large and some small. All add up to a worthwhile contribution towards conserving the environment. Now note below some ways in which energy could be saved in relation to the cleaning routines and the products used in your own establishment. (At this stage you may find it appropriate to review the list you made on page 56.)

SECTION 6
Linen and laundry

After completing this section you will be able to:

assess the linen and laundry system at your establishment
compare alternative linen and laundry services
control your linen supply.

The linen needed by any establishment which serves customers includes many more items than the sheets, towels and tablecloths which first come to mind.

Sometimes, the list is surprisingly long: sheets, pillowcases, napkins, towels, tablecloths, uniforms, curtains, chair-covers, dusters – in fact, anything made of fabric that is normally cleaned by washing and ironing, or by dry cleaning treatments.

Clean linen, in good repair, is important because it gives customers an immediate message about the standards of an establishment. There can be no compromise about the quality of cleanliness on offer, regardless of whether your stocks are chosen from budget ranges, or are of a more costly quality.

Linen stocks vary enormously from place to place, but all have one thing in common; they are very costly to maintain in peak condition.

Some establishments wash and iron their linen on the premises. Note below what other options are available for servicing linen.

Depending on the size and function of your premises, linen can be:

- owned by the establishment and laundered on the premises by employees
- owned by the establishment and laundered on the premises by contract staff
- owned by the establishment, but sent to an outside laundry
- rented from, and laundered by, an outside laundry service.

Combinations are possible. For instance, some linen is owned by the establishment and laundered in-house; other items, say staff uniforms, are supplied and laundered by an outside laundry service. Or disposable items can be used; tablecloths, napkins, sometimes even sheets and pillowcases which can be thrown away after use.

Deciding the size of linen stocks

The person whose job is to choose and order linen must strike a balance between ordering too much, which would waste money and could create a security and fire risk, and too little, leading to empty and therefore unprofitable bedrooms because of delays in making up beds.

The number of sheets, pillowcases and towels needed depends partly on how often sheets are changed for customers who stay several nights. In a luxury hotel, this might be every day – in a hall of residence, every week.

Another important factor to bear in mind is where your linen is laundered. If it is laundered on the premises, three or four sets of linen per bed are usually recommended. This allows for one on the bed, one in the laundry and one or two in the linen room. If polyester-cotton, which needs no ironing, is used, it is possible to manage with less.

If your establishment uses a commercial laundry, as many as eight sets of linen per bed may be needed. This higher figure is to allow for delays in transporting the linen to and from the laundry.

It is useful to keep a few extra sets of soft furnishings, blankets and duvets in stock so that rooms may be kept in use while these larger items are being laundered or dry cleaned.

The amount of restaurant linen needed depends on the numbers of meals served at each table each day, and on your establishment's policy on how often tablecloths should be changed. Here, too, allowance must be made for time spent at the laundry, and extra supplies kept in stock if cloths are sent out for laundering.

Staff whose uniforms need frequent laundering – chefs, for example – will need three or more sets each. For staff whose uniforms need to be laundered less frequently, two sets will usually be enough. Some larger establishments issue uniforms from a central pool each day, keeping a supply of three or more per person plus spares for emergencies.

Because looking after linen is a costly process, the way in which it is laundered must be carefully planned and controlled. Dealing with linen in a haphazard way only leads to confusion, demotivation among staff, and eventual loss of profits.

The first step towards planning an efficient linen service is to be fully aware of current procedures on your own premises. In the space below, list as many different items of linen as possible, which are used regularly at your establishment – everything from a duster to a chef's hat, a tea towel to a guest's bathrobe. Indicate whether the item is owned or rented from an outside laundry, how and where each item is laundered, and how often.

Item	Owned/rented	Laundry arrangement	Frequency of laundering

Make a note below of any items of linen that you think is unnecessary and could be eliminated, or replaced by a disposable item.

Do you always have enough clean linen? If not, make a note of the possible reasons. Mention, too, any linen and laundry services that pose particular problems.

Then think about customers' needs – does your establishment provide a laundry or a dry cleaning service for their personal items?

If not, explain below whether you think this would be a profitable scheme to introduce, bearing in mind both customer satisfaction and your own profits?

Looking at the type of linen and laundry service in use at your establishment, summarise below its advantages and disadvantages. Note also how long the service has been in use, and why it was chosen in the first place.

Now think about the other linen and laundry options open to your establishment. Consider them briefly in turn below and list the main benefits and problems that might occur if a new way of dealing with linen were introduced.

It is only by balancing the costs of using an outside laundry against the costs of running a laundry on the premises – and perhaps considering the third option of renting both linen and laundry services – that you will be able to arrive at the most efficient system.

Before you decide, you should make extensive enquiries about potential costs and efficiency of collection and delivery times from outside agencies, and make sure you do not overlook any of the costs involved in running your own laundry, including wages, power and maintenance.

If the costs are similar, you might then wish to look at other areas of comparison, bearing in mind convenience, availability of staff and wear and tear on the linen itself.

Now that you have a clear picture of all the linen used in your establishment, and know how it is looked after, draw up some general guidelines below which would help you order suitable stocks for your establishment.

Then choose one category, for example bed linen or uniforms, and note below the specific, additional points you would look for when deciding what to order.

The general guidelines for choosing what to order should include:

- Type: what items are to be used?
- Fabric: which fabric will be the most suitable for the purpose?
- Quantity: how many of each item will be needed?
- Laundry facilities: will the items be washed on the premises or sent out to a laundry?

In deciding the type and fabric of *bed linen*, remember that it should be:

- comfortable – cotton is more comfortable than nylon because it is cooler to sleep in
- suitable for the laundry system – pure cotton, which creases quickly is really only appropriate for premises where the bed linen is changed every day. Cotton-polyester mixes are often more practical as they do not need ironing if washed with care
- hygienic – to kill bacteria, bed linen must be washed at high temperatures. Cotton or cotton-polyester is usually chosen for this reason.
  Blankets made of cotton or synthetic blends are less costly to maintain than wool blankets, which must be dry cleaned.

Towels of all types should be:

- absorbent – made of cotton or a cotton-rayon mixture which adds bulk and increases absorption
- strong, so that they will resist constant rubbing
- hygienic – they must be washable at high temperatures.

Soft furnishings like curtains, bedspreads, loose covers should be:

- fire retardant or resistant
- colour-fast to avoid fading in sunlight
- strong and able to withstand heavy wear
- easy to clean – linen launders well, velvet is more difficult to look after
- practical for their purpose – for example, polyester net curtains would provide privacy, while heavy wool might be chosen for warmth and insulation.

Restaurant linen should be:

- easy to match, repair and replace
- well finished to withstand frequent laundering
- able to absorb food spillages
- suitable for the laundry system in use. Pure linen, for example, is more likely to need outside laundering than an easy-care cotton and polyester mix.

Uniforms should be:

- comfortable to wear
- easy to clean
- practical, safe and hygienic – they should be able to protect the wearer from spillages and dirt, and protect food from the person handling it.

Imagine you were asked to re-equip your premises with linen, including bed linen, towels, tablecloths and staff uniforms. Note below what types of linen you would choose for each area, bearing in mind the comments you made in the previous exercise on your establishment's linen and laundry arrangements. Also note how many sets of each type you think it would be necessary to order.

Item	Type	Quantity

Controlling the linen supply

Linen is handled by many people, and is passed through many different rooms and areas, even different buildings if an outside laundry service is used.

It is important, therefore, that at each stage in the handling process care is taken to ensure there is always enough clean linen to hand when it is needed, and loss and theft are minimised.

Describe briefly below what method of linen control is used in your establishment, and any alternative methods you know of.

The four main ways of keeping a check on your linen are:

1. Operating a clean for dirty system. This works best when you have a central linen store and is suitable for smaller establishments. It means that no item of clean linen is issued before a dirty one is handed in, in its place. One drawback to this system is that clean and dirty items may come into contact with each other, and clean linen may be infected by the dirty items. It is also more time consuming, as it means that beds cannot be made or tables set without a journey to change the linen.
2. Alternatively, a set amount of linen can be issued each day based on the number of items expected to be used in each area or department. Any spare stock is returned to stores at the end of the shift. This method works best in establishments where it is difficult to be precise about the number of customers expected and the amount of linen which will be needed. Care must be taken, however, not to issue too much linen, or items could be mislaid or stolen.
3. Another system is to top up every linen cupboard or trolley to a certain level each day, based on the number of items expected to be used. Unused items are left in the cupboard or trolley, waiting to be topped up next day. The advantage of this system is that some stock is always ready for emergency use, but there can be a risk of theft if access to the cupboard or trolley is not controlled.
4. With the requisition method, staff check to see how much linen will be needed on a particular day, either by looking at the list of arrivals or departures, or by first checking and stripping beds. They will then fill in a requisition note for the amount of linen they need.

The following guidelines will help you store and control your linen supply:

- Make sure that the same number of items have been returned from the laundry as were sent out – and make a note of any shortfall.
- Check over linen when it is dirty and set aside any which is stained or in need of repair. Clean linen is folded and more difficult to check.
- Store clean linen with all folds facing the same way and all types in their correct place. In some establishments, linen is stored in packs instead of by item type, so that all the linen required for a single bed, for example, is easily available.
- Move aside any items already on the shelf, then replace them on top of new stock. When stock is rotated in this way, the life of linen is extended as it gets equal wear and benefits from being allowed to rest before use.

In the next section, you will be reading about health, safety and security. Here are some hints on hygiene when dealing with linen to think about before you move on to consider the topic in more detail.

When dealing with clean linen:

- wash your hands before handling
- store on clean surfaces and protect from dust.

When dealing with dirty linen:

- put in a bag or skip as soon as possible. Do not shake dirty linen about
- send to the laundry promptly, as damp encourages the growth of mildew and bacteria
- wash your hands carefully after handling.

SECTION 7
Health, safety and security

After completing this section you will be able to:

- recognise the links between health and hygiene
- organise safe working practices
- assess security at your own establishment.

Health, safety and security are the intangible services that must be provided by everyone working in hotels, catering, leisure and tourism.

You cannot serve good health to your customers with an early morning cup of tea, nor can you offer options on safety and security as if they were choices on a menu. The services must simply be there – unseen, but always uppermost in the mind of the person whose job it is to run the establishment.

Customers and staff are, of course, protected by the law in the areas of health, safety and security. Customers suffering from food poisoning, for example, or injured by fire on your premises, may seek compensation through the courts by claiming for damages.

Staff, too, are protected by the Health and Safety at Work Act, usually enforced by environmental health officers. Failure to comply with this Act is a criminal offence.

The commercial implications for your establishment of health, safety and security are obvious. No-one wants to stay on dirty premises where they are at risk in any way.

There is, too, a moral obligation shared by everyone who works in the industry. This is to ensure the health and welfare of everyone on the premises by insisting on the highest standards and refusing to compromise where health, safety and security might be at risk.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Rigid rules of hygiene are laid down for food preparation routines, and must always be applied. But food poisoning, deadly though it can be, is not the only health hazard that can threaten your customers.

Non food areas can also be health risks. The incidence of highly infectious diseases like AIDS and Legionnaires Disease means that housekeeping staff must always be aware of the need to stop the spread of bacteria throughout an establishment.

Bacteria can be spread by sloppy practices when handling dirty linen, or cleaning bathrooms and toilets.

Bacteria carrying pests like rats, mice and cockroaches are attracted to unhygienic surroundings where they can find food and warmth.

Human beings can also carry bacteria, so it is important that everyone working on your premises pays attention to personal hygiene. Housekeeping staff who clean bathrooms and toilets need to keep themselves and their clothes spotless, to wear gloves when required, and to wash their hands frequently. Anyone who is unwell, for whatever reason, is putting customers and fellow staff at risk by continuing to work.

The most important ways of stopping bacteria spreading are:

- removing by thorough cleaning
- killing by heating, as in washing up, cooking, and laundering
- slowing up the reproduction rate by freezing and refrigerating
- keeping out by covering up.

Remember that germs thrive best in warm, moist, dirty surroundings like drains, toilets and beds where they feed on minute particles in an unclean environment and multiply quickly.

Normal cleaning routines within an establishment can usually contain this growth and spread, but, since bacteria multiply so quickly, standards can never be allowed to slip.

List below any unhygienic practices, concentrating on the housekeeping area, which you think could cause bacteria to spread. Check this list with routines on your own premises, to see if there are any areas of vulnerability. You might also find it useful to refer back to the list you made on page 50. Then make a note of any changes which could be made to improve standards of hygiene.

It is important to keep pests out of your premises. You might think of an over persistent sales representative as a pest, or the customer who is reluctant to pay a bill. But real pests are very much smaller, probably nastier and potentially much more damaging to your establishment.

Many pests can enter your premises, some carried by people or pets, some through open windows and doors and some through tiny holes or cracks in the fabric of the building.

Pests like flies and cockroaches are distressing and off-putting to customers, because they suggest poor standards of cleaning and maintenance. They are harmful in other ways, too:

- cockroaches, flies, ants, wasps, mice and rats act as carriers for harmful bacteria
- woodworm, moths, carpet beetles, mice, and rats can damage furniture, fittings and the fabric of your building
- mosquitoes, bed bugs, head lice and fleas attack human beings
- spiders and silver fish are off-putting, but generally harmless.

The following guidelines are useful in discouraging pests:

- maintaining clean conditions throughout the premises
- recognising and dealing with the first signs of infestation such as droppings, gnaw marks, shredded paper, holes in woodwork or blankets
- reporting or dealing with cracks and crevices that might encourage infestation
- leaving no food uncovered, and removing left over food promptly
- removing waste promptly to refuse areas
- keeping waste bins tightly covered and washed after use, rubbish bags tightly closed.

You can see that in every area of running an establishment, it is by taking precautions against what *might* happen that you will achieve the best results in ensuring the high standards of hygiene necessary for the health of customers and staff.

With infectious diseases like AIDS and Legionnaires Disease, both hazards to public health, precautionary measures become even more vital.

The following guidelines, adapted from *Housecraft: Accommodation Operations*, are designed to help housekeeping staff guard against AIDS:

- AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is caused by infection with a virus which can break down the body's resistance to other diseases, with the result that the sufferer will eventually die.
- AIDS is not transmitted through food and drink, or by physical contact like shaking hands. In the majority of known cases, it has been passed on through sexual intercourse or by taking infected blood into the bloodstream.
- Special care is necessary, then, when handling or cleaning anything which might have come into contact with another person's blood or semen. This can include razors, used razor blades, hypodermic needles, sanitary towels, soiled sheets and towels, pools of vomit or spills of excreta:
  - always wear gloves when handling items or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated
  - dispose of sharp objects in a metal or plastic bin which cannot be pierced
  - ensure adequate towels are available, or substitute warm air dryers or disposable towels in shared public areas
  - dispose of or sterilise cleaning equipment used to clean blood or vomit
  - use a chemical disinfectant like bleach to clean surfaces and equipment where necessary.

Legionnaires' Disease is also a potentially fatal infection; the bacteria which cause it live in warm, damp conditions. Hot and cold water systems are particularly vulnerable, particularly when the temperature of the water is between 20 and 45 degrees Celsius and stagnant or very slow moving.

These conditions occur in:

- hot water systems where the temperature of the water drops during long pipe runs or infrequent use
- cold water tanks which are poorly insulated so the water gets quite warm
- air conditioning systems which use water to collect the excess heat and then cool the water in special towers.

The bacteria cause illness if they are inhaled, for example by breathing in fine spray from a shower, fast running tap, or whirlpool bath.

The growth of these bacteria can be controlled by:

- regular cleaning of storage tanks and cooling towers
- treating the water with chemical disinfectants.

Both these jobs require special expertise, and specialist firms should be employed to carry them out.

On the premises, though, shower heads should be dismantled regularly so that they can be cleaned and disinfected. This is particularly important if the showers are not used very often, because the bacteria will have had time to multiply dangerously.

SAFETY

Good safety procedures will help you avoid major disasters, like fires, and minor accidents like tripping up over things left carelessly lying around. Remember that the customer who trips over an electrical flex, breaks an ankle and suffers a ruined holiday or missed business meeting as a result may not see this as a minor accident.

> Nearly all accidents happen as a result of human error. It is important to remember this because, as one of the people responsible for running your establishment, you have a moral and a legal responsibility for the safety of your customers and your staff.
>
> This is dealt with in more detail in the *Mastercraft* video: *Health, Hygiene and Safety: The Human Factor*.

Not all accidents can be prevented, but most can be avoided with the right precautions. As with hygiene, safety standards should be built in to the routine of any establishment. When these standards are allowed to drop, the results can include:

- injuries or even deaths
- fines or imprisonment
- loss of jobs
- loss of customers
- forced closure of premises
- licences lost
- reputations ruined
- costly court battles.

It is a grim list, but important to remember because it brings home the message that safety procedures cannot be ignored or neglected.

Think about safety on your premises. Then look carefully at cleaning, maintenance and front of house routines from the point of view of both customers and those doing the work. What hidden dangers can you spot? List them below, with a note on how you would make procedures safer.

Here are some of the areas where problems can arise if great care is not taken:

- using dangerous equipment
- using cleaning agents
- disposing of rubbish
- disposing of cigarette ends
- anticipating trouble, with football supporters for example
- lifting heavy weights
- fire drill practice
- washing floors
- spills
- electrical equipment
- washing glass and crockery
- disposing of broken glass and crockery

You can see from this list that almost anything that is done on your premises can be unsafe if proper care is not taken.

Fire is probably the biggest single hazard facing your establishment, and preventing it should be a major and continuing concern.

The dangers to life and health are understood by everyone, but fire can also put the existence of your establishment, and the jobs of those employed there, in jeopardy. Should you be unlucky – or careless – enough to have a fire on your premises you may find that the cost of insurance policies will soar, orders will be lost, staff may go to work elsewhere and you may be sued in the courts.

Your precautions against fire should, of course, include a review of all procedures where carelessness or bad practice could result in a visit from the fire brigade. From the point of view of your own establishment, you may think that all the necessary steps have been taken. But this alone might not be enough to prevent the outbreak of fire, because you are also dealing with a more unpredictable factor, the customer.

Usually, customers will not come on to your premises with the intention of starting a fire. But it is difficult in any building open to the public to control people's behaviour, and some customers and staff may be less careful than they would be in their own homes.

In addition, many customers will be unfamiliar with the layout of your premises, and, in a hotel or a hall of residence, there will be people sleeping in the building at times when there may be no-one around to sound the alarm if a fire starts.

These are the practical things you can do to prevent fire:

- Be aware of people behaving suspiciously in places they should not be.
- Check fire escape routes daily, and check vacant rooms. Conference, meeting and exhibition rooms should also be checked after use.
- Provide enough ashtrays in rooms and public areas where people might smoke. Paper plates or similar inflammable items should never be used as makeshift ashtrays.
- Ashtrays should always be emptied into metal bins with hinged tops, never into any container that might melt or catch fire.
- Waste should, as far as possible, be stored outside the building.
- Cleaning rags, linen, rubbish, chemicals and other inflammable items must be stored in established places where they will not be a fire hazard.
- Guards should be placed in front of open fires.
- Electric bar fires and fan heaters should be kept away from furniture. The use of multi-point adaptors should be discouraged and plugs removed from sockets when appliances are not in use.
- Electric wiring and installations should be checked regularly by a qualified electrician. Staff should report any potential hazards immediately.
- Fire fighting equipment should be checked regularly to ensure that all items are in the right place and in working order. As the minimum guide, smoke stop doors should be checked daily, fire alarms weekly, hose reels every three months and emergency lighting every six months. Extinguishers should be checked annually by an expert.
- Doors, including internal doors and windows, should be closed where possible to stop the spread of fire.
- Fire doors should be kept closed and free from obstructions. They should never be bolted or locked.
- Fire exits must be clearly marked and fully accessible. Fire alarm points, fire fighting equipment, exit notices and direction signs must be clearly visible, and lit when there is no natural light.

If this long list seems like a tall order, remember that the results of fire can be devastating and incalculable. Remember too that things that are all too easily overlooked – like rubbish left lying about or stuffed behind radiators – can be responsible for major fires.

> The fatal fires at Bradford City Football Stadium and Kings Cross Station were both spread by accumulations of combustible rubbish, some of which was found to have been lying around for many years.

Describe below what precautions are taken on your premises to prevent fire, and describe the procedures to be followed should fire break out.

It is important for everyone to know exactly what to do in the event of fire. These are some of the points you should have included:

- the most likely causes of fire on your premises
- items in work areas which are particularly inflammable
- action needed to alert the fire brigade, the occupants of the building and someone in authority
- where the exit routes are
- where the assembly points are
- who is responsible for checking names of everyone who should have evacuated the building
- what fire fighting equipment is available
- how the different types of fire fighting equipment are operated
- when it is safe to attempt to fight a fire.

Now go back to the notes you made on the previous page and add any information you missed the first time. (Use extra paper if you wish, attaching the sheets to page 91.)

First aid

Under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations, all establishments are required to have adequate first aid provision. This means that particular members of staff have to be appointed either as qualified first aiders or as people who can take charge if there is no first aider available.

Properly stocked and distinctly marked boxes must be provided – normally green with a white cross.

Everyone who works in an establishment should know who their first aider is, and where the nearest first aid box is to be found.

If all your attempts to prevent accidents fail – and, because you are dealing with people, some accidents are inevitable – it is important to know what to do.

The first essential is to stay calm and act quickly. Make sure the person injured is in no further danger, and turn off any equipment which may be nearby and could have caused the accident.

In the case of an electric shock, turn the power off immediately at the plug – but do not touch the injured person until you have done so.

Remember that treatment in a hospital or medical centre will be needed if there is a cut that needs stitching – generally a deep cut that is longer than a centimetre/half-an-inch, or if there is a wound that has been contaminated by dirt.

Try to ensure that someone on the premises is trained in mouth to mouth resuscitation.

> You will find more information on first aid in *Health, Hygiene and Safety in the Hotel and Catering Industry*.

SECURITY

Security is the third 'unseen' quality that is vital to the success of your establishment. It is about protecting people – staff and customers, premises and possessions.

Sound security policies are important because they prevent losses and dishonesty, detect potential dishonesty, preserve good customer relations and keep your business within the law.

Ensuring personal security means taking steps to keep customers and staff from harm. The first essential is to check whether there is any aspect of your operation that leaves customers or staff vulnerable. You should consider the risk of break-ins to guest bedrooms, and find out whether staff face a difficult journey home at night where they might run the risk of attack.

When you have identified any potential weak spots with a personal check, consult the experts. They will often help to identify security problems that you may have overlooked. These are the people who can help you:

- the police. Your local crime prevention officer will give free advice on all aspects of security
- the Institute of Hotel Safety Management, for hotel security officers and others concerned with hotel security
- private security companies
- your insurance company
- the National Supervisory Council for Intruder Alarms
- the Hotel and Catering Training Company.

These organisations will all offer advice to help you work out the most effective security policy for your premises.

As well as ensuring the protection of your premises against intruders, your security methods should cover the following points:

- checking the validity of cheques and credit cards
- dealing with rowdy, drunk or undesirable guests
- coping with suspected theft or lost property
- giving access to rooms when keys are said to be lost
- dealing with customers or staff suspected of dishonesty
- receiving a delivery of goods
- raising the alarm and evacuating guests in an emergency.

In the space below, briefly review the security systems on your premises, concentrating on potential hazards to the security of staff and customers. Suggest any improvements to be made.

Everyone on your premises has a part to play in maintaining good security, and so regular training and refresher sessions on the safeguards you establish are essential. These are some of the areas you may have mentioned in your review:

BARRIERS AND DETERRENTS

- External doors should have strong frames and be fitted with locks conforming to British Standard 3621.
- Cellar doors and some internal doors, such as those to cash and store rooms, should also have strong locks.
- Windows, particularly louvered windows, fanlights, rooflights and rear windows should be fitted with locks or grills.
- Gates and doors in walls and fences should have strong hinges and British Standard locks.

You may also have considered the possible benefits of security night lighting, security patrols and video cameras.

KEYS

- Keys should be carefully controlled – careless use of them can lead to breakdowns in security which make other safeguards useless.
- The number of duplicate and master keys should be restricted and a careful record kept of holders.
- All access to, and use of, keys should be controlled and recorded.
- Make it clear that staff should never leave keys in locks, nor leave them lying around, nor lend them to other staff members, customers, members of the public, friends or contractors.

In hotels, there are particular problems with room keys. Ways to minimise potential breaches of security include:

- Do not number keys with room number. If a numbered key is lost a thief who finds it will know where to strike.
- Keep guest room keys out of sight and out of reach. Some hotels make it too easy to take keys, or tell at a glance if a room is occupied.
- Organise a posting box at reception where guests can leave their keys safely when they go out.
- Ask staff to leave guest room doors open when they are working in the room and locked when the room is empty, even if only for a few minutes.
- Establish an issuing procedure for keys, and do not allow keys to be handed over straight away to anyone who claims to have lost one.
- Replace lost keys immediately. This can be expensive - some establishments prefer the computer-based or electronic access system where each guest has an individually coded key or card.

SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOUR

The knack of recognising suspicious behaviour comes with experience, but simple observation can help you spot potential problems before they have time to develop.

Situations that should make you naturally wary include local events like football matches, or unruly groups of people wanting food after the pubs close. You may feel wary – and therefore alert to the possibility of trouble – when members of a restaurant party begin to leave one by one before the bill has been settled.

You may want to keep a close eye on a guest who seems nervous, startled or worried – always remembering that there can be perfectly natural reasons for this sort of behaviour. And the guest who hangs around for no apparent reason, or who seems particularly interested in other guests, should also be observed in a discreet way.

Sudden or distracting disturbances, too, should alert you to the possibility that there may be more going on than meets the eye.

Problems that threaten the security of your premises can be relatively minor, like petty pilfering, or dangerous in the extreme, like a bomb threat or terrorist scare.

People running large organisations like hotels, and their staff, are unfortunately caught up from time to time in terrorism, attacks and kidnaps. It is sensible to be aware of these risks, and if possible decide on procedures to be followed in the event of a similar emergency.

If a controversial event is being held on your premises, you should be extra vigilant. Remember that the Grand Hotel at Brighton was bombed when a Conservative Party Conference was held there.

Staff should be trained to spot any suspicious behaviour or suspicious parcels, for example, and to evacuate the building in an emergency. The police can be very helpful with specialist training on how to deal with this type of situation.

In the United States, *crisis management*, an in-depth approach to security, is taken very seriously, and some people think that events like the bombing of the Grand Hotel at Brighton show a need for a similar approach in the UK.

The aim of crisis management is to anticipate and be prepared for any situation, and the basic guidelines on how to make it work concentrate on:

- regular inspections and audits
- posted warnings
- observing set capacity limits for rooms
- enforcement of computer passwords
- drills, reviews and meetings
- looking for signals of a crisis
- watching national and international events
- considering situations and contingencies
- selecting a team of key people to act in a crisis.

Security of stock

Stock security is achieved by stringent control of orders, deliveries and supplies. It is essential to have a system that minimises waste, pilfering, damage, over-use and any other abuse of supplies. To make sure your system is working you should carry out regular stocktaking checks.

Successful stock control starts with the way in which goods are ordered. The system may range from a box file for storing copies of orders, delivery notes, invoices and so forth, to a sophisticated computer program, used by all the company's units.

The order form is usually printed in duplicate or triplicate, depending on the number of copies needed. The usual system is one copy to the supplier, one copy kept on file and one copy sent to accounts when the goods are received.

It is a good idea to ask for deliveries to be made at quiet times of the day, so that you can check off the order when it arrives and make quite sure that everything is present and correct. You must also make sure that there has been no damage in transit. When this has been done, the person who has checked in the order must sign the delivery note.

Goods should be stored as soon as possible after delivery. Storage cards, sometimes called bin sheets, can be drawn up to give you a detailed record of the stock in store at any time. This operation is often computerised in large establishments.

Note briefly below the advantages of keeping careful records of ordering, delivery and storage of stock, and taking care of who has access to stocks, and when.

You will find that you can learn much about what is happening to your stock – whether it is being pilfered, wasted, or even if there is simply too much of it:

- if a product is being over-used
- if a product is being over-used in one area
- which products are unpopular
- if you are wasting money and space by holding too much of one product
- if a product is being used carelessly
- if there are any additional needs
- if stock is being misused or abused
- if there is pilfering
- if there is hoarding.

Pilfering and hoarding are separate problems, although each can seemingly make your stock disappear.

Magpie-like members of staff, who build up a private supply of stores, are quite common and simply need to be shown the error of their ways. They need to know the next duster is at hand, and are demonstrating their own desire for security. Pilfering, on the other hand, is a more serious matter and usually a disciplinary offence.

This completes the self-study unit *The Accommodation Operation*. The companion units are:

- *Space Management*
- *Maximising Occupancy*.

If you have attended the HCTC course, you should now complete the assignments in your Operational Management Planner.